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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

28 August 1957

O/NE INTERNAL ONLY

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 42-57

SUBJECT: Organization and Format of NIE 11-4-57

1. Although the question of whether we should divide up the annual omnibus Soviet estimate has been laid to rest at least for this year, there remains the problem of how best to present the big NIE itself. We have long feared that it was so bulky as to inhibit reading, at least by the high policy-makers. Another problem has been the uneven level of detail, from a high degree of generalization in the political sections to considerable detail in some of the military and economic parts. Finally, in the light of various criticisms on our product we are making an effort to improve the format and readability of Conclusions, which in the big Soviet NIE are an extreme example of "everything but the kitchen sink."

2. To meet some of these problems, I would propose the following modifications in the format of NIE 11-4-57 as opposed to NIE 11-4-56:

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a. That we replace last year's 21 paragraphs of Conclusions and 3 paragraphs of Introduction with a brief summary estimate, a sort of overview which in 25-30 paragraphs written more in essay and less in Conclusions style will summarize the main trends in the Soviet scene as we see them. In these we would attempt to get away from too many flat predictive statements and to move toward a more generalized projection of trend lines.

b. If the above summary were sufficiently brief and readable, it might be worthwhile binding it separately from the bulk of 11-4-57, and thus produce something short enough for the high policy maker to read. We could call the two parts 11-4 Part I and Part II and coordinate and issue them simultaneously; alternatively we could subsequently issue the overview under a separate cover. In any event, simple physical separation might be a useful presentation device to encourage various screeners to send at least the summary forward to their principals.

c. If Conclusions are desired in addition to the above Summary, it might be possible to have a one page, 3-4 paragraph summation of the summary, simply stating the main trends as we saw them.

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d. The remainder of the paper would be organized into chapters much as in 11-4-56, with perhaps some minor modifications (see below).

3. Some reduction in the over-all length of the 11-4 series has long seemed desirable in principle, even to the IAC agencies, but the Board will have to make a strong and continued pitch for this, if we are not to end up with the usual length. By doing some pruning, yet keeping the same over-all framework we could probably cut out 4-7 pages of text and 5-8 pages of tables for an over-all reduction of 11- 19%. Places to cut might be:

a. Economic chapter -- some cut in economic growth paras.

b. Science and Technology -- it is worth considering whether or not to eliminate this as a separate section, putting the over-all aspects as a subsection under Economics, and dovetailing the hardware aspects into the Military chapters. We could cut a page or two at any rate.

c. Military chapters -- Some condensation and rearranging seems feasible in this longest single part of the NIE, with more extensive cross-referencing to other NIEs. On the other hand, we may have to include more on capabilities to attack the US, in light of our commitment in lieu of doing another Gross Capabilities NIE.

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d. Tables -- several of the military tables seem unnecessarily detailed, even for an omnibus estimate.

e. It should also be possible to cut 2-3 pages of methodology from the military cost study.

4. Substance. It seems to me that the thrust of the NIE this year (insofar as it has any one theme) should be the changing nature of the Soviet system -- a system which is socially, politically, militarily, and economically in a process of accelerated transition from the "rigid Stalinist mold." We should stress the external and internal forces which are dictating this change, as well as the forces which are being released by it. An important corollary of the above is that in such a process of transition firm projections, particularly for the latter part of the period under review, are correspondingly more difficult. Particularly in the military field, we may have been pushing the current trend toward "requirements" thinking beyond its inherent limitations. Therefore, we should not hesitate to say, where we feel firm projections would be misleading, that we simply cannot estimate with confidence this far ahead. Alternatively, we may want to give ranges in some cases, and to explain the reasoning behind the upper and lower limits.

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5. New Subjects. There are a few places where we may want to beef up the treatment beyond 11-4-56. The possibility of having to include more on "gross capabilities" has already been mentioned. Other suggestions are:

a. A bit more treatment of internal trends, since further evidence has accumulated on domestic developments and attitudes. Such matters as the emergence of a form of "public opinion" in the USSR, present and potential institutional changes, etc. should be covered.

b. We have promised our IAC brethren fuller treatment of Soviet strategy, but we should set this in context by a discussion of Soviet views as to the likelihood and advisability of large and small wars and the use of force as a deterrent.

c. Perhaps more discussion of current Soviet policy alternatives vis-a-vis the Satellites in the light of the many developments since mid-1956, particularly re Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.

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